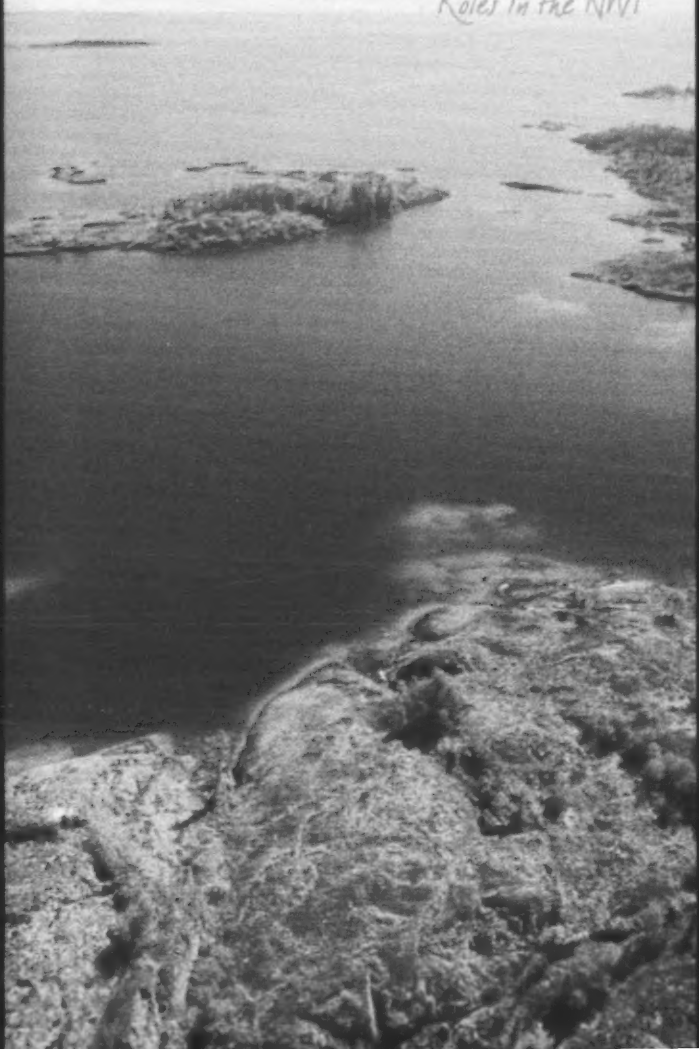
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada

A Citizens Guide to INAC's

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Roles in the NWT



Partners in Environmental Stewardship

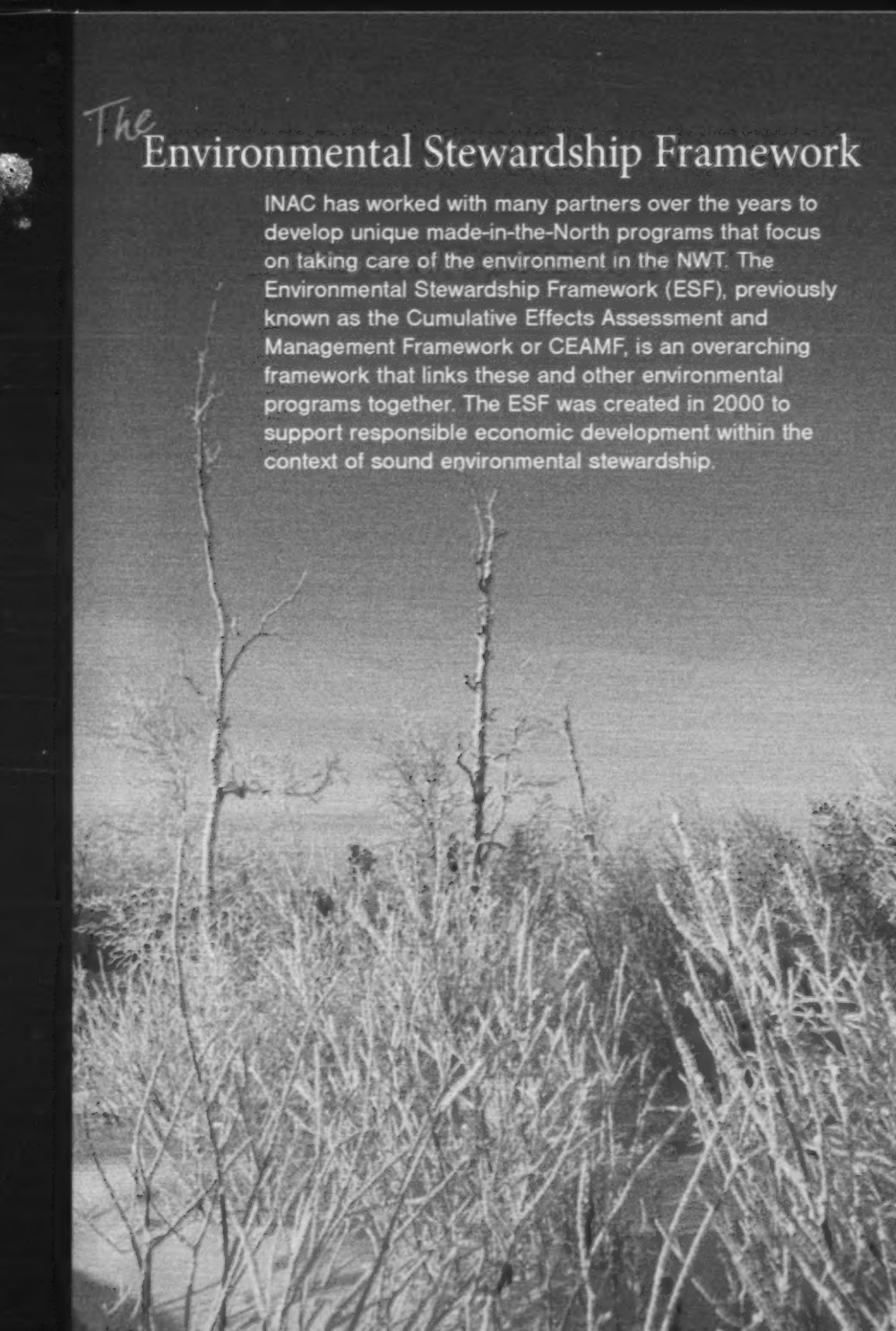
All Northerners have a responsibility to care for the land and water. In the Northwest Territories (NWT), a number of organizations play leadership roles in carrying out this shared responsibility, called "*environmental stewardship*". These include Aboriginal governments, territorial and federal governments, resource management boards, regulatory boards, environmental non-government organizations, communities and industry.

As an active environmental stewardship partner, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) is committed to ensuring land and water use activities are conducted in an environmentally sustainable manner. INAC is involved in a number of programs or initiatives to help keep the environment healthy today and for future generations. This booklet outlines the specific activities that INAC carries out to fulfill its role as an environmental steward.

Canada

The Environmental Stewardship Framework

INAC has worked with many partners over the years to develop unique made-in-the-North programs that focus on taking care of the environment in the NWT. The Environmental Stewardship Framework (ESF), previously known as the Cumulative Effects Assessment and Management Framework or CEAMF, is an overarching framework that links these and other environmental programs together. The ESF was created in 2000 to support responsible economic development within the context of sound environmental stewardship.



What does the ESF look like?

The Framework recognizes that there are many components that must come together to make sure the environment is protected, that communities thrive, and the economy is strong. These components are:

1. **Vision and Objectives:** It is important that residents of the NWT share a common vision for environmental stewardship. Where do we want to go? How do we want to get there? These are questions that Northerners need to ask themselves and each other to come up with a collective answer.

2. **Land Use and Conservation Planning:** Land use plans help guide development and protect important ecological and cultural areas. They provide a context for both conservation and development. Protected areas are an important part of land use plans and community conservation plans.

3. **Baseline Studies and Long-term Monitoring:** Understanding baseline (pre-development) conditions and monitoring changes over time will help ensure that adverse effects are avoided or minimized. It will also help us determine which changes are caused by development and which changes are the result of natural variation.

4. **Research:** Environmental studies (e.g. determining why caribou numbers are falling) will increase our understanding of the environment, culture and economy, and improve our ability to make better decisions.

5. **Environmental Screening, Assessment and Review:** Thorough examination of the potential effects of development proposals are essential to ensure that if a project proceeds, it does so with minimal negative environmental effects and maximum social benefits.

6. **Regulation and Enforcement:** Regulation involves rights issuance, land use permitting, water licensing, and/or harvest quotas. If a project receives permits to proceed, the terms of these permits (including land and water licences) are intended to ensure that related environmental effects are minimized, monitored carefully and that appropriate changes are made to the project as it proceeds. The rules are enforced by the responsible authorities.

Photo credit: Myranda Bolstad

7. **Information Management:** Environmental and social information needs to be made available to all users in an understandable fashion. This will support good decision-making and help us to avoid studying the same thing over and over again, or missing areas that we need to study.

8. **Capacity-building:** Groups must have the people and finances to effectively participate in decision-making at all levels. Only in this way will decisions reflect the values and visions of the people affected.

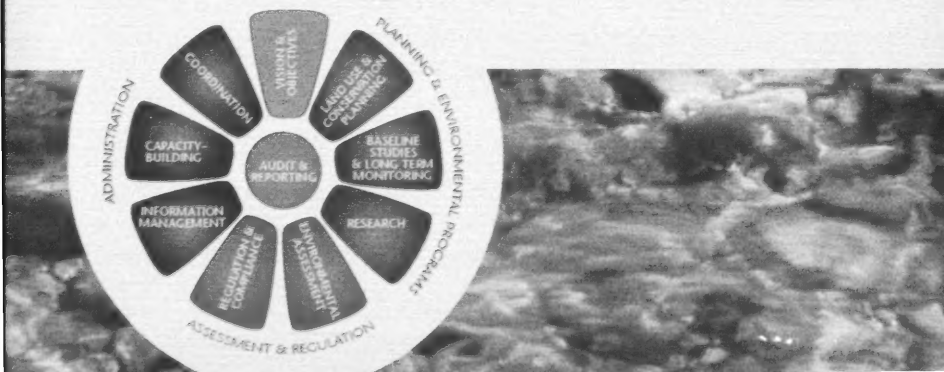
9. **Coordination:** All participants must work together to implement the Framework. No one group is without responsibility; no one group has the sole responsibility. All of us have a role to play in ensuring the environment is protected and that we benefit from responsible economic development.

10. **Audit and Reporting:** Audits, including the NWT Environmental Audit, check on the health of the environment and the regulatory system. The results inform decision-makers on ways to improve operations.

ESF guiding principles?

With the goal of protecting and improving territory-wide environmental and community health, the ESF:

- Builds on existing structures, policies, legislation, initiatives and tools;
- Emphasizes the importance of consultation, communication and education, and the effective management of resources through partnerships;
- Advises decision-makers to ensure environmental, societal and economic considerations are taken into account in their decisions;
- Applies Traditional Knowledge in conjunction with western science, the "precautionary principle" and adaptive management practices;
- Fully respects Aboriginal inherent and treaty rights, land claims and self-government agreements, and/or legislation; and
- Supports the goal of ensuring that responsible economic development proceeds in the context of sound environmental stewardship.



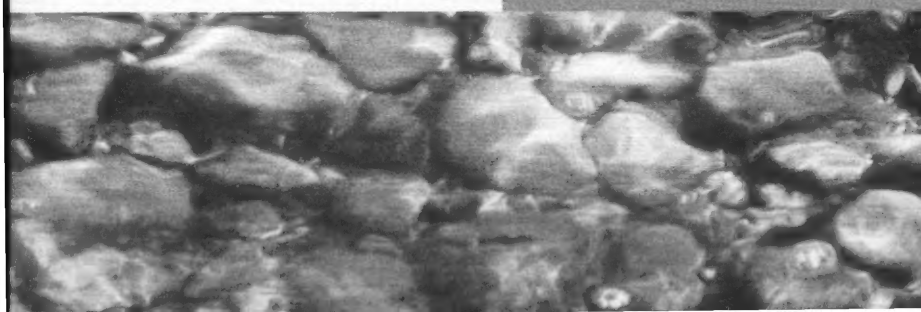
What is the ESF Blueprint?

To help different organizations understand where they fit in and how they can be the most effective in implementing the Framework, the ESF Steering Committee provides guidance and advice in the form of the *Environmental Stewardship Framework Blueprint*. Organizations are encouraged to use the recommendations found in the Blueprint to guide both everyday activities and long-term planning; and to help fill in any gaps by working with other environmental stewards. The Blueprint is reviewed and updated annually to help evaluate progress. Managing who-does-what to help protect the environment is complex, and the Blueprint helps everyone keep track.

ESF Steering Committee Partners

These organizations have been involved in developing and implementing the Framework.

- Akaitcho Territory Government
- Tłı̨chǫ Government
- Gwich'in Tribal Council
- Inuvialuit Game Council
- North Slave Métis Alliance
- Northwest Territory Métis Nation
- NWT Environmental Non-government Organizations
- NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines
- Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers/ Canadian Energy Pipeline Association
- Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board
- Environment and Natural Resources, GNWT
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
- Environment Canada



How do INAC's

Programs and Activities support the Environmental Stewardship Framework?

1. Vision and Objectives

Despite the level of commitment shown by environmental partners, there is no single vision for environmental stewardship that is agreed to by all parties in the NWT. INAC and other ESF Steering Committee partners are working towards coordinating a shared vision with common objectives that best reflects the environmental goals of Northerners. In the meantime, organizations continue to have their own policies and legislation that support their individual environmental stewardship practices.

INAC has a number of different guidelines, strategies, policies and legislation geared towards environmental protection and management. In some cases, these may fit into multiple ESF components. Some examples are:

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT LEGISLATION

INAC administers the *Mackenzie Valley Resources Management Act* (MVRMA), a unique piece of legislation that provides for an integrated system of land and water management in the Mackenzie Valley. The Act establishes public co-management boards to regulate the use of land and water, to prepare regional land use plans to guide development, and to carry out environmental assessments and reviews of proposed projects. These boards include the Gwich'in, Sahtu and Wek'èezhii land and water boards; the Gwich'in and Sahtu land use planning boards; and the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board. The *Northwest Territories Waters Act* establishes another co-management board, the NWT Water Board, which operates in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. The MVRMA also includes provisions for monitoring cumulative impacts on the environment, and for independent environmental audits.

In the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) established a regulatory regime for the northern part of the NWT that began in 1984. This regime is based on a system of joint management, involving the Inuvialuit and territorial and federal levels of government. The IFA also established a number of council and committees with environmental responsibilities, including the Environmental Impact Review Board and the Fisheries Joint Management Committee.

Photo credit: Paul Vecsei

NWT WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Effective water resources management has become a top environmental priority for many Northerners. INAC and the Government of the Northwest Territories have spearheaded an initiative to develop the NWT Water Resources Management Strategy to

reflect the voices of NWT residents and help define expectations for water use and management in the territory.

Central to the motivating factors behind the development of the strategy is that northern residents must collectively play a greater role in understanding the significance of current and emerging water management issues. All Northerners must be able to influence and shape the future direction of water resources management. The strategy development process has been based on effective engagement with all water partners – the end result being a strategy created by Northerners, for Northerners. It must also conform to all Aboriginal inherent and treaty rights, land claim agreements, and self-government agreements. In addition, the strategy will support upcoming transboundary water negotiations. The development and implementation of the NWT Water Resources Management Strategy is an important step in ensuring the sustained health of our water resources.

TRANSBOUNDARY WATER MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS

INAC recognizes that water in the NWT is impacted by activities in other jurisdictions. The flow of water through rivers and lakes simply does not recognize borders between provinces and territories. As the authority responsible for water resources management pursuant to the *Northwest Territories Waters Act*, INAC participated in the negotiation of a formal agreement on transboundary waters with its neighbours. The Master Agreement on managing transboundary waters in the Mackenzie River Basin was signed by Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Colombia, the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Canada in 1996. This agreement requires provinces and territories to negotiate the specific details of how transboundary waters will be monitored and managed in each jurisdiction through bi-lateral or potentially multi-lateral agreements. The NWT currently has a bi-lateral agreement in place with the Yukon. Working together across jurisdictions on a watershed basis is the best way to manage water, a resource that crosses borders so naturally.

The Master Agreement also set up a unique management body – the Mackenzie River Basin Board. INAC sits on this board along with other federal, territorial and provincial government agencies. The Board's mandate is to facilitate transboundary water agreements and monitor the overall state of the aquatic environment in the Mackenzie Basin. Monitoring results are compiled every five years to detect and/or evaluate trends or impacts on northern waterways – this report is considered an "ecosystem check-up".

The Community of Fort Simpson sits on the shore of the Liard River. Water quality monitoring stations are set up on the NWT's four main transboundary waterways: the Slave River, Hay River, Liard River and Peel River.

Photo credit: Patrick Kane

THE MACKENZIE RIVER BASIN BOARD is focusing its attention on ways to increase Aboriginal involvement with the Board, and how to enhance the use of Traditional Knowledge in all its activities. Traditional Knowledge generally refers to the long-standing traditions and practices of local communities. It encompasses the wisdom, knowledge, and teachings of these communities, and in many cases has been passed on for generations from person to person. A working group has been formed with the purpose of providing direction to the Board on this subject. This group is compiling an inventory of Traditional Knowledge that relates to oil sands, hydro-electric projects and climate change. Information collected will ultimately contribute to the Board's *State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report*.

MINE SITE RECLAMATION POLICY

INAC developed the Mine Site Reclamation Policy in 2002 to strengthen federal standards for the protection of the environment through the reclamation of producing mine sites in the NWT. The policy is intended to: minimize impacts on the environment and human health; reduce the environmental liabilities that fall to the Government of Canada when mines are abandoned; provide industry and the public with a clear description of the federal government's expectations with respect to mine site reclamation; and strengthen relationships with the northern regulatory authorities by establishing clear and consistent standards and processes. This policy is supported by the Mine Site Reclamation Guidelines, developed by INAC in consultation with industry, other government agencies and Aboriginal groups and organizations, to provide guidance for parties involved in reclamation work.

CONTAMINATED SITE MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Contaminated Site Management Policy developed in 2002 provides guidance for the management of contaminated sites located on reserve lands, on federal lands north of the 60th parallel, and on any other lands under INAC's custodial responsibility. Through the implementation of this policy, INAC contributes to a safer, healthier, sustainable environment for First Nations, Inuit, and other Northerners by striving to preserve and enhance the ecological integrity of the environment.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Like other federal departments, INAC has a Sustainable Development Strategy that guides its policy-making efforts to ensure socio-cultural, environmental and economic benefits are maximized. The strategy helps to make sure that the principles of sustainable development are integrated into all programs, policies and decision-making; and emphasizes the need to work in partnership with communities through open and accountable processes that respect and reinforce Aboriginal traditions, governance structures, language and culture. The Department developed its first Sustainable Development Strategy in 1997. Since then, INAC has been working to improve the strategy on an on-going basis, and the fourth version of the Sustainable Development Strategy covers the years 2007-2010.

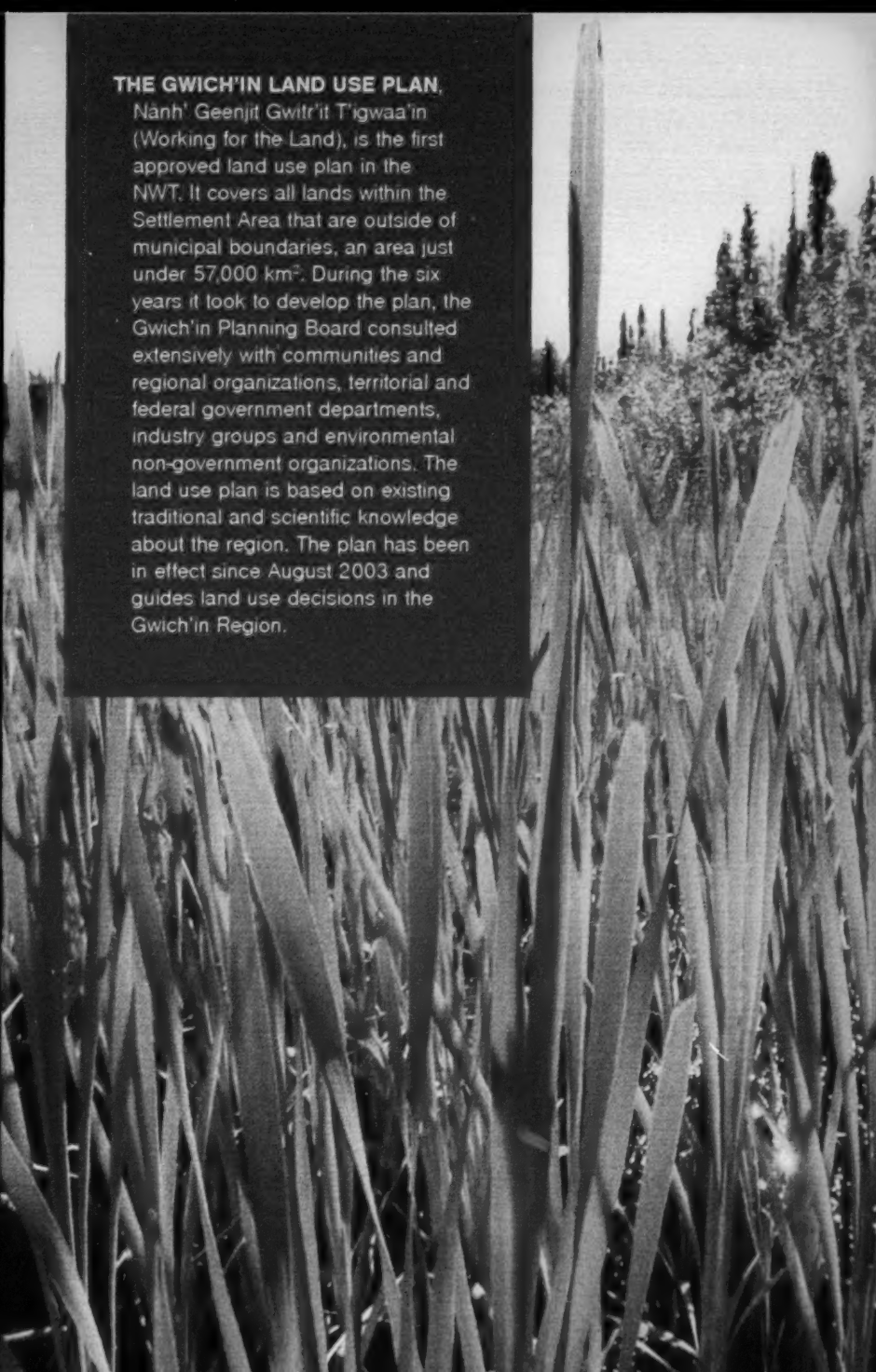
2. Land Use and Conservation Planning

INAC contributes to land use and conservation by supporting activities such as regional land use planning initiatives and the NWT Protected Areas Strategy process.

REGIONAL LAND USE PLANNING

Regional land use plans are community-based tools that map out available land use options and help guide regional decisions about ecological protection, sustainable communities and responsible economic development. INAC

Photo credit: Paul Vecsei



THE GWICH'IN LAND USE PLAN, Nành' Geenjit Gwitr'it T'igwaa'in (Working for the Land), is the first approved land use plan in the NWT. It covers all lands within the Settlement Area that are outside of municipal boundaries, an area just under 57,000 km^2. During the six years it took to develop the plan, the Gwich'in Planning Board consulted extensively with communities and regional organizations, territorial and federal government departments, industry groups and environmental non-government organizations. The land use plan is based on existing traditional and scientific knowledge about the region. The plan has been in effect since August 2003 and guides land use decisions in the Gwich'in Region.

Photo credit: Anne Jane Grieve

DÉLĮNE'S ELDERS have talked about protecting Saoyú - ?ehdacho for over two decades as the area is deeply linked to the history of the Sahtugot'ine, the Dene of Great Bear Lake. The traditional place names and rich oral histories tied to these two peninsulas help to define who the Sahtugot'ine are as a people. In 2000, the community of Délįne entered Saoyú - ?ehdacho into the NWT PAS process. It was the second candidate area to be proposed under the strategy, and the first area to receive interim protection. Working through a number of steps with INAC and other partner organizations, including conducting thorough cultural, ecological, and resource assessments of an area's values, takes time. Nine years later, these two peninsulas have been designated as a permanently protected National Historic Site. All along the community of Délįne has remained strong and persistent in their vision to preserve the stories and the land of Saoyú - ?ehdacho for future generations.

assists and advises the boards that have emerged from land, resource and governance negotiations and the *Mackenzie Valley Resources Management Act* in developing regional land use plans. The Department works closely with planning boards and other federal and territorial agencies throughout the course of plan preparation, approval and implementation. An example of a completed land use plan is the Gwich'in Land Use Plan.

NWT PROTECTED AREAS STRATEGY

The NWT Protected Areas Strategy (PAS) is a key component of long-term conservation planning in the NWT. The strategy outlines an eight-step community-guided planning process used to identify and protect significant cultural and ecological areas throughout the territory. Built on a partnership among communities, all levels of governments, co-management boards, environmental groups and industry, the PAS recognizes the need to balance conservation and economic development while respecting Aboriginal treaty rights and third party interests.

Partners use the best available traditional and scientific knowledge to determine what type of protection is needed, how an area should be managed, where the final boundaries should be, and what type and amount of human activity is allowed in a particular area. Different kinds of legislation can be used for securing protection depending on the identified values.

In addition to providing technical expertise throughout the PAS process, INAC provides a coordinating function as the federal member of the Protected Areas Strategy Secretariat.

3. Baseline Studies and Long-Term Monitoring

In order to be an effective environmental steward, it is necessary to understand the fundamental conditions of the environment such as the quality of the water and air - this is called baseline monitoring. INAC's team of technical experts is constantly working to increase baseline data through various research and monitoring activities. This growing data set contributes to an ever-improving understanding of the environment and its changes. Some of INAC's programs include:

WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

INAC manages the NWT's water resources through the administration of the *Northwest Territories Waters Act and Regulations*, the *Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act*, and the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act*. This responsibility is fulfilled primarily by:

- Developing and managing scientific programs such as the collection, analysis, interpretation and distribution of water quantity and quality information. This includes the Water Quality Baseline Network and the Snow Survey Network;
- Conducting specific aquatic ecosystem studies; and
- Providing ongoing expert scientific advice to a range of clients, including Aboriginal organizations, co-management boards, industry, other government departments and the public, and providing shared-services to the Nunavut regional office.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE of INAC's commitment to environmental stewardship is its participation in the Peace Athabasca Delta Project (PAD). This is an innovative multi-disciplinary project set up to look at water resources in the Peace Athabasca region. Since the NWT's largest transboundary waterway, the Slave River, enters the territory from neighbouring jurisdictions, INAC participates as a member of the PAD Steering Committee alongside a wide scope of Aboriginal and government partners. In addition to building positive cross-border working relationships, the Department's role is to provide technical expertise and support.

NWT CUMULATIVE IMPACT MONITORING PROGRAM

The goal of the NWT Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program (NWT CIMP) is to support informed resource management decisions by monitoring the environment and assessing cumulative impacts of land and water uses and deposits of waste. Cumulative impacts are changes to the biophysical, social, economic, and cultural environments caused by the combination of past, present and "reasonably foreseeable" future actions. When fully implemented, this program will provide the necessary resources to help fill gaps identified in current environmental monitoring activities, report on the overall state of the NWT environment, and encourage community-based monitoring with an emphasis on capacity building. The NWT CIMP promotes the use of both Traditional Knowledge and science in monitoring, while considering both the human and biophysical environments.

A working group with representatives from Aboriginal, territorial and federal governments, along with observers from other organizations, is guiding the design and implementation of the program. The NWT CIMP is a requirement of the Gwich'in and Sahtu Land Claim Agreements, the Tłı̨chǫ Agreement and Part 6 of the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act*. The Inuvialuit are also full partners in the program. INAC provides coordination support and scientific

guidance to the NWT CIMP Working Group and NWT CIMP projects.

LABORATORY ANALYSIS

INAC's Taiga Environmental Laboratory is the NWT's only accredited full-service analytical lab, performing a wide range of chemical tests on samples of water (fresh water, ground water, drinking water, industrial effluents and sewage) and soil. The laboratory helps INAC staff and others determine how the environment is being impacted by industrial development. Tests performed by the laboratory also help ensure that companies are in compliance with environmental laws and regulations. Through collaborative efforts with Aboriginal Engineering Ltd., Taiga Environmental Laboratory offers its services to private industry, territorial and municipal governments, and other federal departments on a fee-for-service basis.

CONTAMINANTS RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT

INAC assesses and remediates abandoned mines and military sites in the NWT, and carries out studies to determine if there are contaminants in soil, water and fish. The work is done in an inclusive manner which builds trust and partnerships with communities, respects northern traditions and culture, as well as using sound project management and effective communication. One example is the Port Radium mine site.

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING COMMUNITY-BASED MONITORING PROGRAMS is one objective of the NWT Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program. Building on existing environmental work conducted in the Mackenzie Delta region in relation to the Mackenzie Gas Project, the NWT CIMP has partnered with the Inuvialuit to facilitate the development of a community-based monitoring pilot project. The pilot project will help Northerners document and understand how the land is changing or being impacted by development. The pilot program will promote capacity building, test data collection and reporting protocols, foster community engagement and promote the use of both science and traditional knowledge in monitoring. The pilot project is intended also to enhance the communities' role as environmental stewards. It is hoped that the program will be expanded to other regions of the NWT based on the results and lessons learned during the pilot project.

◀ *Communities play an important role as environmental stewards. Members from the community of Tuktoyaktuk are actively involved in CIMP's pilot project. L-R: Steve Kokeli, Philip Nasogaluak, Logan Gruben, Peter Voudrach and Chucky Gruben Top: Craig Gruben, Fred Wolki*

THE PORT RADIUM SITE is a former uranium and silver mine located on a peninsula along the eastern shore of Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories, near the Dene community of Déljne. The site was decommissioned in 1982 to the standards of the day. Due to more than 40 years of mining, silver, copper and uranium were present in soils and surface water at the immediate site. The site also had waste rock and tailings containing radionuclides – radioactive contaminants. Small amounts of hydrocarbons and asbestos residue were present at the site. Physical hazards, such as mine openings, were the most immediate safety issues at the site.

In 2005, the Canada-Déline Uranium Table (CDUT) released its final report, which included 26 recommendations for development and implementation of long-term health and social programs. These recommendations also included remediation of the Port Radium Site to address risks posed by contamination. Déline and INAC worked closely together to come up with a detailed site-specific Remediation Plan. The majority of people hired to do the clean-up work were from the community, and participated in skill development opportunities such as heavy equipment and barge operation training. The work crew capped (and even relocated) tailings, closed the mine opening, got rid of asbestos that was on site, and demolished other potentially hazardous structures.

The remediation of the Port Radium mine site was completed in 2008. The community of Déline will continue to monitor the site to ensure that problems do not develop in the future. The site has been remediated to the specific targets determined in the Remediation Plan and a 30% drop in radiation levels is confirmed. The environment around the Port Radium mine site is safer for people that use the land and healthier for local plants and animals.

◀ *Community site tour at Port Radium, July 2008. The Port Radium site tour, to acknowledge the completion of remediation activities at the site, was part of a healing journey taken by Déline community members by boat around Great Bear Lake.*

4. Environmental Screening, Assessment and Review

INAC participates in two separate environmental assessment management regimes in the NWT. In the Mackenzie Valley region, the process is led by the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board pursuant to the *Mackenzie Valley Resources Management Act*. In the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and the Inuvialuit Final Agreement apply.

Environmental assessments consider the potential impacts of a project before decisions are made to proceed, to ensure that any negative impacts are avoided or minimized. INAC provides information and expertise to the NWT's resource management boards to help them determine what the potential environmental effects of proposed development may be, and possible ways to address or mitigate these effects. The Department works closely with other federal departments and the territorial government. INAC is committed to making sure environmental assessments are of high-quality and contribute to informed decision-making with respect to economic development in the NWT.

5. Regulation and Enforcement

INAC administers and enforces many different laws in the NWT, giving "teeth" to some of INAC's environmental stewardship roles. The Department has the authority to issue orders when a company or individual does not comply with the rules. INAC also gives expert testimony at resource management board hearings and participates in contractual agreements, such as the environmental management agreements, and supports legal proceedings as appropriate.

REGULATION ACTIVITIES

INAC provides expert advice to resource management boards on the effects on the environment of proposed water and land activities, and suggests ways to address potential impacts. This assists the boards in making informed decisions on how development should proceed with company applications for land use permits and water licences. INAC staff also provide input during the environmental assessment process should a project end up being referred for further review.

ENFORCEMENT

INAC inspectors - water resource officers and resource management officers - make sure that companies and individuals follow the rules with regards to land and water use in the NWT. Inspectors work closely with developers to ensure they understand the terms and conditions of water licenses, land use permits,

and land tenure instruments, and that their operations are in regulatory compliance. Legislation is enforced with an emphasis on prevention. Enforceable authorizations can be issued under various legislation such as the *Territorial Lands Act, Federal Real Property Act, Northwest Territories Waters Act* or the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act.*

ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS

INAC is an active party to, and custodian of, environmental agreements for large new development projects such as the NWT's diamond mines. Environmental agreements are contracts signed by INAC, the mine, the Government of the Northwest Territories and Aboriginal groups to set out additional environmental management tools for the diamond mines, including requirements for long-term monitoring. Environmental agreements create a vehicle for Aboriginal participation during the life of the project through the establishment of environmental monitoring agencies.

6. Information Management

There is a lot of good environmental work being done in the NWT on a regular basis; however organizing and sharing this information continues to be a challenge. In addition to trying to make INAC's various sources of information available, the Department often acts as a liaison to help connect work or people that may benefit from information sharing.

INAC makes data accessible using a variety of tools, including SID-VIEWER, NWT's Spatially Integrated Dataset. The dataset contains spatial digital data including mineral rights, prospecting permits along with snow survey and water quality stations, to name a few. SID-VIEWER is available online at http://nwt-tno.inac-ainc.gc.ca/ism-sid/index_e.asp.

INAC is working with the Government of the Northwest Territories and other partners to develop an NWT Monitoring Portal. The intent of this initiative is to provide an information management system capable

SINCE THE EKATÌ MINE OPENED in 1998 at Lac de Gras, it has had a dedicated INAC inspector. This has set a precedent for the other diamond mine sites in the NWT. The assigned inspector is not only very familiar with the technical details of each mine's permit conditions, but also has an opportunity to build a positive working relationship with company and neighbouring communities. This is particularly important since operations at each diamond mine are on a large-scale and can be complex. As a result of proactive communication, the inspector can discuss preventative measures at length, and possible solutions to concerns that may arise, before there is a risk of potential negative environmental impact.

of supporting the information sharing needs of communities, industry proponents, environmental non-government organizations, interveners in regulatory and project review processes, and government departments and agencies involved in territorial monitoring activities.

7. Capacity Building

Increasing community capacity in the area of environmental stewardship is a priority for INAC. The Department tries to support capacity-building through various opportunities on a regular basis. Some examples of INAC's many programs are below.

INTERIM RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Aboriginal groups and governments in the NWT are facing capacity issues with respect to participation in resource management activities. In response to these pressures, INAC implemented the Interim Resource Management Assistance (IRMA) program. The IRMA funding program is intended to strengthen the ability of Aboriginal communities in unsettled claim areas in the NWT to participate in a broad scope of land and resource management activities that may affect their surrounding land use areas. Given the current resource management context, the IRMA program simply cannot meet all the funding requests of Aboriginal groups and governments in unsettled land claim areas across the NWT. In the meantime, INAC continues to provide funding to participants on a project-by-project basis.

TECHNICAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The Taiga Environmental Laboratory is committed to increasing scientific knowledge in the NWT and offers a variety of training opportunities. For example, each summer the laboratory hires post-secondary northern and/or Aboriginal students to work as Junior Lab Technicians. These students learn about the day-to-day operation of an accredited laboratory, how to analyze samples, safety in the workplace, as well as how to operate instrumentation. The laboratory has also started to hire high school students to help promote awareness and interest in science. Taiga Environmental Laboratory has the facilities and experience to customize training programs to build capacity in the field of environmental monitoring. Laboratory staff also

THROUGH THE NWT CUMULATIVE IMPACT MONITORING PROGRAM, INAC is working with the Sahtu Renewable Resource Board, the Government of the Northwest Territories, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Environment Canada to develop community-based environmental monitoring sites where high school students will be introduced first-hand to environmental science. The initiative is linked with the concurrent development of a territory-wide grade 10 experiential science curriculum.

Photo credit: Patrick Kane

participate in education-based outreach opportunities, such as science fairs and youth lab tours, whenever possible.

8. Coordination

INAC provides Secretariat coordination services for a number of programs such as the ESF, CIMP, PAS and NWT Environmental Audit. This includes both administrative and technical support.

9. Audit and Reporting

INAC fully participated in the first-ever NWT Environmental Audit, which was completed by an independent auditor in December 2005.

Unique in Canada, this audit examined the overall health and future of the NWT environment by reviewing the effectiveness of programs and processes related to monitoring cumulative impacts and the effectiveness of the regulation of land and water use. The audit made recommendations for ways of improving the environment and how it is managed. The *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act* states that an independent audit of the environment must take place in the Mackenzie Valley at least once every five years. Similar requirements for environmental audits are described in the Sahtu, Gwich'in and Tłı̨chǫ agreements. The second audit is scheduled for 2010.

Photo credit: Paul Vecsei

Moving Forward

Photo credit: Patrick Kane

INAC has a large role to play as an environmental steward and will continue to work with its partners to address gaps identified in the Environmental Stewardship Framework.

For example, land use planning in the territory is not complete, and INAC will continue to support the development and implementation of land use plans. Information management and coordination are areas where INAC can help to ensure that information-sharing protocols are developed so that all parties have the information required to make sound environmental decisions. INAC has also proposed the idea of an NWT Science Center to showcase and advance northern research and learning initiatives.

INAC will continue to support community engagement efforts and the integration of Traditional Knowledge and scientific information as this increases the understanding of northern environmental systems and their ecological and cultural values. This information can play a big role in the decision-making process and optimize regional or local monitoring activities. It also helps build community capacity in the environmental field.

To make sure existing resources are used as efficiently as possible, all parties involved in environmental stewardship need to work together to improve monitoring and management efforts. To be successful, the NWT needs to collectively ensure there are no gaps in overall territorial land management. This requires commitment from all parties at this critical time in environmental history.

INAC is fully dedicated to sound environmental stewardship in the NWT.

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